

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PENSIONS AND PENSIONERS WELFARE OF THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS .(\$*IRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Finance Minister in the Union Budget for 2001-02 had stated that as the Central Government pension liability had reached unsustainable proportions. He proposed to set up a High Level Expert Group on Pensions. Accordingly, the Government have set up a High Level Expert Group to review the existing pension system and to provide a road map for the next steps to be taken by the Government in respect of a new pension programme based on defined contributions. Other reforms, if any, are linked to the receipt of Recommendations of the High Level Expert Group.

Upgradation of State Roads in Orissa

*174. SHRI ANANTA SETHI: Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the recommendations made by the Pande Committee with regard to upgradation of State Roads in Orissa;

(b) the Inter-State Roads in the State which are proposed to be upgraded as National Highway;

(c) whether upgradation of the State road from Gopalpur (Orissa) to Raipur (Chhattisgarh) as National Highway is pending consideration of the Central Government; and

(d) if so, the steps taken in this direction?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS [MAJOR GENERAL (RETD.) B.C. KHANDURI]: (a) and (b) National Transport Policy Committee chaired by Shri B.D. Pande in its report published in May, 1930 had *inter-alia* recommended for upgradation of following Inter State Roads in Orissa as National Highways:

(iii) Khargpur to Balasore.

(iv) Berhampur to Raipur.

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RAJYA SABHA

Both these roads have already been declared as National Highways.

(c) and (d) The State Road from Gopalpur to Raipur has been declared as National Highway No. 217 *vide* Notification No. S.O.(E) 923 dated 12.10.2000.

Rural cottage industries

†*175. SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY: Will the Minister of SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES AND AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that condition of the conventional rural cottage industries is getting deplorable;

(b) if so, what steps Government propose to take for the promotion of the rural industries; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SMALL SCALE INDUSTRIES, AGRO AND RURAL INDUSTRIES (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) to (c) The Khadi and Village Industries sector consists essentially of conventional rural cottage industries. Considerable efforts have been made by the Government for the development of Khadi and Village Industries including conventional (traditional) rural cottage industries. The assistance provided to this sector consists of credit, training, technological and marketing support. As a result, these industries have been registering growth in production and employment. During the last three years the production of Khadi and Village Industries has increased from Rs. 4519.31 crore in 1997-98 to Rs. 7212.00 crore in 2000-2001 and employment has increased from 56.50 lakh to 62.73 lakh during the same period. In order to further strengthen the KVI sector, the Government has recently announced a package on 14.5.2001. The package mainly consists of Rebate Policy for five

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.